

How to “Walk the Water”



WHAT IS IT?

Walking the Water is an observation exercise that allows training participants to visualize how water flows across the landscape.

Participants begin their walk at the highest point of the site and, following the signs of erosion and water movement, they walk to the lowest point and make observations about the water’s path along the way.

WHY DO WE DO IT?

The “Walking the Water” exercise allows participants to better understand the water dynamics present at a site and is a first step towards designing an effective water management system. Participants can then plan how best to slow, spread, and sink water across the site.

TERMS USED

Slow, spread and sink: A principle used in the Permagarden Approach to prevent erosion and bank water in the soil for future use. Water is slowed down through the use of water harvesting structures and allowed to spread out evenly over an area so it can sink deep into the soil.



HOW TO Walk the Water

METHOD

STEP 1

Together with participants, walk to the highest point of the landscape and identify where water is entering the site.

STEP 2

Split participants into smaller groups of 4-5 people per group. Instruct them to imagine that they are water flowing over the landscape, moving down the slope like water. What path would they follow? Encourage participants to look for signs of erosion and places where water pools as they move down the landscape to the lowest point.

STEP 3

When the groups have reached the bottom of the landscape, gather them together to discuss their observations.

Use the following discussion questions:

- Where did you see erosion in the landscape? What is contributing to this erosion?
- Where do you see places where water is pooling? What features in the landscape allow water to pool here?
- Are plants growing in places where you see erosion or water pooling?
- What is the plant growth like in those areas?

STEP 4

Do the walk again as a large group. During the walk, discuss the observations made and use a stick, shovel, or hoe to lightly trace the pathway of the water.



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